

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2447

To require the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the heads of other agencies, to conduct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the design, development, implementation, and operation of a national database to track participation in Federal means-tested public assistance programs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 8 (legislative day, AUGUST 31), 1998

Mr. LUGAR introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the heads of other agencies, to conduct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the design, development, implementation, and operation of a national database to track participation in Federal means-tested public assistance programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds that—

5 (1) during 1997, the Federal Government spent
6 over \$21,000,000,000 to deliver food stamp benefits

1 under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 2011
2 et seq.) to over 23,000,000 individuals;

3 (2) a portion of the funds spent on food stamp
4 benefits annually is misspent through overpayments
5 and fraud, which undermines the integrity and con-
6 fidence in the food stamp program;

7 (3) the Comptroller General of the United
8 States has found that—

9 (A) as many as 20,000 individuals were re-
10 ceiving food stamp benefits in at least 2 to 4
11 States at the same time during 1996;

12 (B) due to this duplication, overpayments
13 to the households in those States during 1996
14 totaled approximately \$3,900,000; and

15 (C) there was a similar duplication of pay-
16 ments in other Federal means-tested public as-
17 sistance programs, such as the temporary as-
18 sistance to needy families (TANF) program
19 funded under part A of title IV of the Social
20 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

21 (4) certain States currently have cooperative
22 agreements under which matches of recipients of
23 means-tested public assistance programs are tracked
24 and coordinated with neighboring States, but there

1 is no comprehensive national database or informa-
2 tion system to track participation across State lines;

3 (5) the Personal Responsibility and Work Op-
4 portunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law
5 104–193) created a number of requirements to track
6 means-tested assistance throughout the United
7 States, including time-limited receipt of assistance
8 under the food stamp program and the temporary
9 assistance to needy families (TANF) program;

10 (6) a centralized database would be the most ef-
11 fective tool to prevent receipt of means-tested assist-
12 ance in multiple jurisdictions and would avoid dupli-
13 cated effort on the part of States;

14 (7) according to the Director of the Office of
15 Management and Budget, improved mechanisms to
16 provide accurate information to employees who de-
17 termine eligibility for means-tested assistance would
18 help prevent overpayments and improve service to
19 clients; and

20 (8) data sharing at the time of application for
21 means-tested assistance could change enforcement
22 efforts from a pay-and-chase method to a method
23 that would be more proactive and efficient.

1 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON NATIONAL DATABASE FOR FEDERAL**
2 **MEANS-TESTED PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PRO-**
3 **GRAMS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, in
5 consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human
6 Services, the Secretary of Labor, the Commissioner of So-
7 cial Security, and the Secretary of the Treasury, shall con-
8 duct a feasibility and cost-benefit study of options for the
9 design, development, implementation, and operation of a
10 national database to track participation in Federal means-
11 tested public assistance programs.

12 (b) ADMINISTRATION.—In conducting the study, the
13 Secretary of Agriculture shall—

14 (1) study an option under which information in
15 the national database is collected and made available
16 in real-time; and

17 (2) provide safeguards to protect against the
18 unauthorized use or disclosure of information in the
19 national database.

20 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
21 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall
22 submit to Congress a report on the results of the study
23 conducted under this section.

1 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$250,000.

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